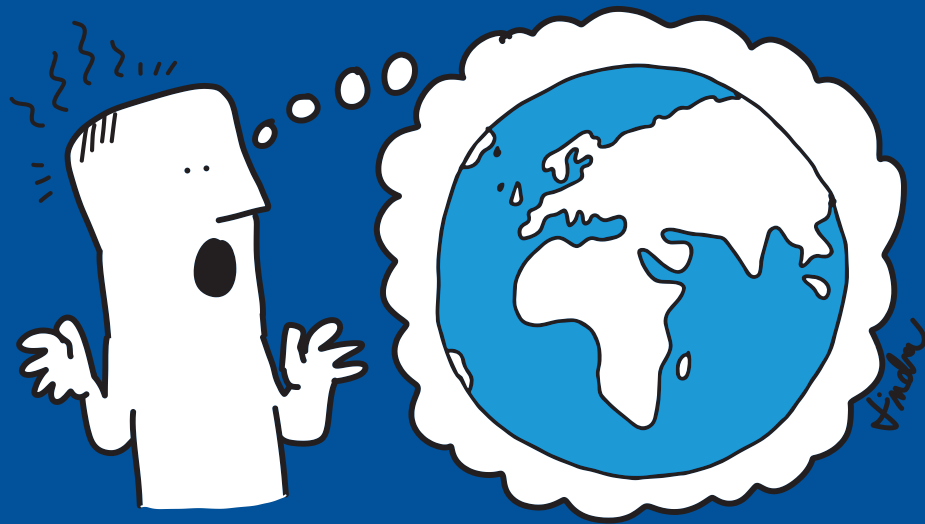


2020

*Working Life*

# *The State and Future of Finnish Leadership*

#finnishleadership



THINKING BIGGER  
AND BOLDER!

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1 April 2018**

**Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment  
Regions and Growth Services Department  
Working Life 2020  
P.O. Box 32, 00023 GOVERNMENT  
Tel. +358 29 516 001  
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# Preface

**A few years** ago, we branded the Finnish working life as part of the Working Life 2020 project. This work resulted in three narratives of skills, cooperation and safety. While leadership also emerged as a theme in the discussions, it was not perceived as one of the narratives but rather a theme cutting across the entire working life brand.

**However, leadership** was perceived to play such a strong role in facilitating the working life brand narratives that we wanted to revisit the topic. Among other aspects, we considered whether we have failed to utilise this important strength and competitive advantage as a result of our modesty. Could the Finnish leadership style also succeed in attracting foreign investments and experts?

**This consideration** led to the Finnish leadership narrative, which is supported by thoughts and experiences we collected from a wide group of experts. We wished to obtain an idea of Finnish leadership from those who successfully implement it in their daily work as well as those who study and develop leadership as part of their jobs.

**We also set** our sights on the future in the interviews and discussions. It is impossible to construct a brand narrative of Finnish leadership without the future perspective as the transformation of the working life also poses challenges to leadership. The managers of the future are expected to be increasingly present, interactive and collaborative. Transparency and responsibility is also expected from all activities. The transformation of work also provides new opportunities for renewing activities, which must be taken on with courage and agility. Leaders must be able to keep up with the rapidly changing world, preferably among forerunners.

**Finnish leadership** has everything it takes to be worthy of trust also in the future, even to a point that our leadership style can serve as an example for other countries.

**Margita Klemetti**

Project Manager, Working Life 2020

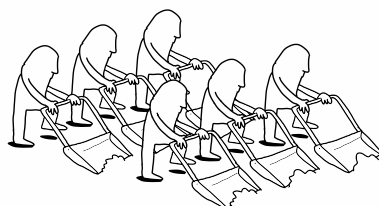


# FINNISH+ Leadership

TRADITIONAL  
IMAGE:



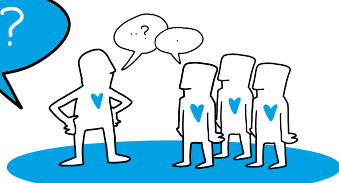
A HEROIC LEADER



AN EVERYDAY  
HERO

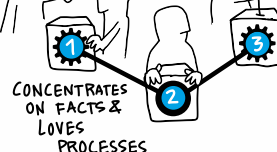
Finnish  
LEADERSHIP

NOW?



SHARED BASIC VALUES

FACT! FACT! FACT!



CONCENTRATES  
ON FACTS &  
LOVES  
PROCESSES

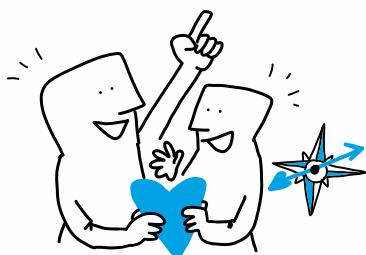
RESULT

VISION?



DOWN TO  
EARTH &  
EASYGOING

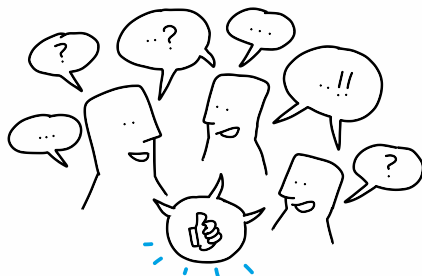
How about  
THE FUTURE?



BEING PROUD OF THE  
SHARED BASIC VALUES



GAINING  
A COMPETITIVE  
ADVANTAGE BECAUSE  
OF LOW HIERARCHY



LEARNING A BETTER DISCUSSION  
CULTURE & COMBINING IT INTO  
DECISION MAKING.



THINKING BIGGER  
AND BOLDER!



***"We plan and consider things carefully in Finland. I think having the courage to make quick decisions and move ahead will be a winning factor in the future."***

**Johanna Ikäheimo** Lappset Group Oy



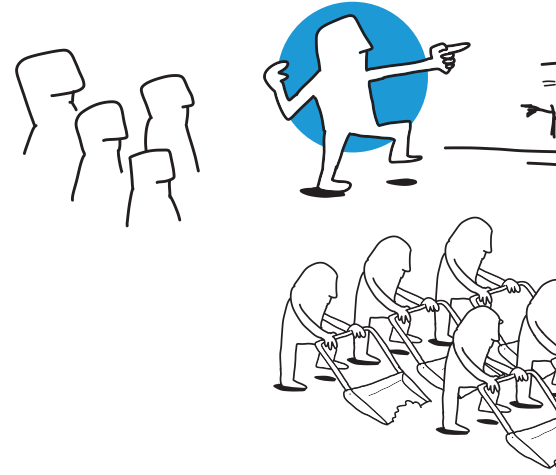
***"In Finnish leadership, increasing emphasis should be put on self-management skills, the importance of interaction and a willingness for renewal."***

**Timo Ritakallio** OP Group



***"To develop the competitiveness of companies, it is increasingly important to utilise everyone's work input and best ideas."***

**Satu Huber** Elo Mutual Pension Insurance Company



# Introduction

**Leadership is not** a simple concept, similarly as leadership itself is not easy or simple. Leadership is often perceived as a characteristic of an individual person even though, in reality, leadership is often shared and it often also manifests in interpersonal activities at all levels, also without specifically assigned roles. Leadership is also affected by the conditions where it occurs. In this case, the significance of societal customs and culture is emphasised. In the corporate life, the industry of the organisation, maturity of the company, competitive situation, strategy, staff and practices all affect what kind of leadership is required.

**Consideration of Finnish** leadership and its characteristics may evoke images of President Urho Kekkonen and the leadership ideal often embodied by our presidents. Kekkonen rose from a modest background to the top of our country and led the nation through challenging times with a fatherly touch, simultaneously laying a foundation for Finland's post-war prosperity. A similar narrative can be told of Kekkonen's predecessors, Paasikivi, Mannerheim and Ryti, all of whom served as presidents during difficult times and under challenging circumstances. Despite this, all of them managed to steer Finland towards a brighter future.

**On the other** hand, in recent decades, our presidents have been characterised by a down-to-earth attitude and an ordinary demeanour. Although they serve in the highest public position in our country, they are considered to be near the common person. Koivisto travelled by a tram to Katajannokka and Halonen could be spotted at the Hakaniemi square among common people. Photos of Niinistö ploughing snow in front of his home have spread around the world. Both of these mental images, the heroic leader and the hero of everyday life, tell a tale of Finnish leadership.

**Characteristics of Finnish** leadership can also be sought by comparing our management customs with other countries. The importance of maintaining "discourse" is often highlighted in the context of Swedish leadership.

This refers to speaking openly about issues and seeking multiple different aspects and solutions to issues. The Swedish method is then compared to the Finnish style of getting straight to the point and aiming to find a solution right at the get go. Additionally, honesty and rigour, traits that are also apparent in leadership, are often emphasised as the virtues of Finns. It is acknowledged around the world that the word of a Finn can be trusted, a Finn will always be on time, and a Finnish company will always give you what you ask for – which is not the case with some other countries. It can therefore be said that there are many mental images connected to the national characteristics of leadership, but can we say anything concrete about Finnish leadership? Something to express its core?

**Despite their differences**, all of these descriptions concerning Finnish leadership share certain features, which we can recognise as Finnish characteristics. But where do they come from and what exactly makes them Finnish?

**If we look** at Finnish leadership against a historical background, we can see how it has taken shape along with other societal development. If we cut a few corners, we can summarise the issue in the following historical frame: Finnish society has lacked a strong elite, i.e. a powerful nobility. Under Swedish rule, we were the easternmost, forest-dwelling part of the empire, and once Finland became a grand duchy in the Russian Empire, the country's elite was so small and weak it needed the support of peasants. This was the breeding ground for the Fennoman movement and the strong agricultural background of the Finnish society. As recently as in the 1800s, the poor people of the rural areas and the workers of cities were excluded from developing the society. However, both groups came to the heart of the events at the beginning of the 1900s.

**After tragic events**, including the Finnish Civil War, the Winter War and the Continuation War fought against the Soviet Union, the foundation for Finnish society was laid



on cooperation and collaborative activities. Although the social order was threatened from both left and right during the early years of the republic, Finland was able to handle the threats and take steps towards becoming a democracy. Finland also benefited from its small size: we needed one another and could only conquer external threats as well as become prosperous through collaboration. As a result, our presumed weakness became our strength. In spite of many internal political struggles, some of them harsh, the development of Finnish society, particularly since the 1970s, is often referred to as a consensus: mutual understanding and harmony. Indeed, the history of Finnish society could be light-heartedly described as a consensus coloured by conflicts.

**When this history** is combined with the uniform culture that has been constructed carefully and dedicatedly in this country, it is no wonder that certain common, shared features can be detected in Finnish leadership. The fact that we have only just “come out of the woods” means that we lack the clear and old power relationships that mark the cultural background of many European countries. In the Finnish society, this is visible as a stronger equality in people’s starting points and a lack of power distances. While it is true that Finland has had gentry and people who are better off, these groups have also been very close to the common public as a result of the small size of the country and the modest conditions from which the construction of Finland began. Equality is apt to describe the Finnish society on a global scale.

**Long traditions** in a uniform culture and a solid shared value basis are apparent in Finnish organisations and lay a foundation for Finnish leadership. But which features are romanticised leadership ideals and which actually correspond to today’s reality? A lot has also happened since Kekkonen’s presidency and the success story of Nokia in the 1990s and early 2000s. The question that must be answered is, therefore: what is Finnish

leadership and what kind of leadership is there in Finnish organisations right now?

**Strictly speaking**, it is of course absurd to talk about Finnish leadership as a monolithic entity. Every leader and organisation is different. Whether leadership is “good” always depends on the situation. But if we would like to share a simplified narrative of the “Finnish leadership” to a person living on the other side of the world, what could we say? Could a common understanding, even a vague one, of the strengths and weaknesses and future development needs of Finnish leadership be helpful to working life in Finland and allow Finnish leaders to take their next steps forward? Could it be used to attract experts from other parts of the world to Finland?

**As this** is a tempting idea, we decided make an attempt. This is a unique attempt in the history of Finland – no previous efforts have been made in cooperation of networks at this magnitude. Nearly one hundred leaders, researchers, and experts have participated in the efforts to define the concept, all of them reflecting on the following question:

***What is Finnish leadership of today and which is the direction towards which it should develop to ensure that Finnish organisations will keep succeeding in the future?***

**The work for** defining Finnish leadership was carried out in the spring of 2018. The work for defining the concept included interviewing Finnish leaders and experts in ownership as well as working on the characteristics in a workshop participated by slightly over 50 Finnish leaders, researchers and other experts. In addition, the material has been discussed in the advisory council of the Working Life 2020 project and a working group for the Finnish leadership style. A list of experts who participated in the work is included in appendix 1. The work was facilitated by Filosofian Akatemia Oy.



**1.**  
***Finnish leadership  
and management  
today***







Internal conflicts in Finnish leadership

## The three paradoxes of leadership

One highly interesting feature emerged in the workshops and interviews.

The final result was far from a clear list of strengths and weaknesses. Instead, Finnish leadership and management appeared to be characterised by three paradoxes. Finnish leadership emphasised characteristics which are strengths and weaknesses at the same time. This is not a case of an 'either-or' perspective where a characteristic must be considered either negative or positive. This is rather a question of being able to view these characteristics as both advantages and challenges depending on the situation. We are therefore dealing with a 'both-and' situation.

## 1. The first paradox:

# Finnish leadership, does such a thing even exist?

When we asked people about Finnish leadership, many of them wanted to point out that there is no such thing as a specific "Finnish" leadership. Good leadership is always based on the situation – not nationality. In fact, people generally felt that leadership is so strongly dependent on the context that it is often difficult to even say anything so universal about leadership that it would apply to all situations.

However, the matter is not that simple, as people addressed highly similar features in connection with Finnish leadership despite the fact that leadership is bound to its context. A shared value basis was perhaps the strength most emphasised in all of the discussions. This was considered to strongly affect Finnish leadership. In addition, even though many appealed to the context-bound nature of leadership, they would immediately follow this by naming general factors considered as part of good leadership, such as interactive skills and supporting development. Indeed, it appears that even though it is difficult to say anything universal about leadership or join its characteristics to nationality, people find it easy to attribute a shared value basis and good basic principles of management to Finnish leadership.

***"There is considerable variation in Finnish leadership depending on the company."***

*Timo Ritakallio*

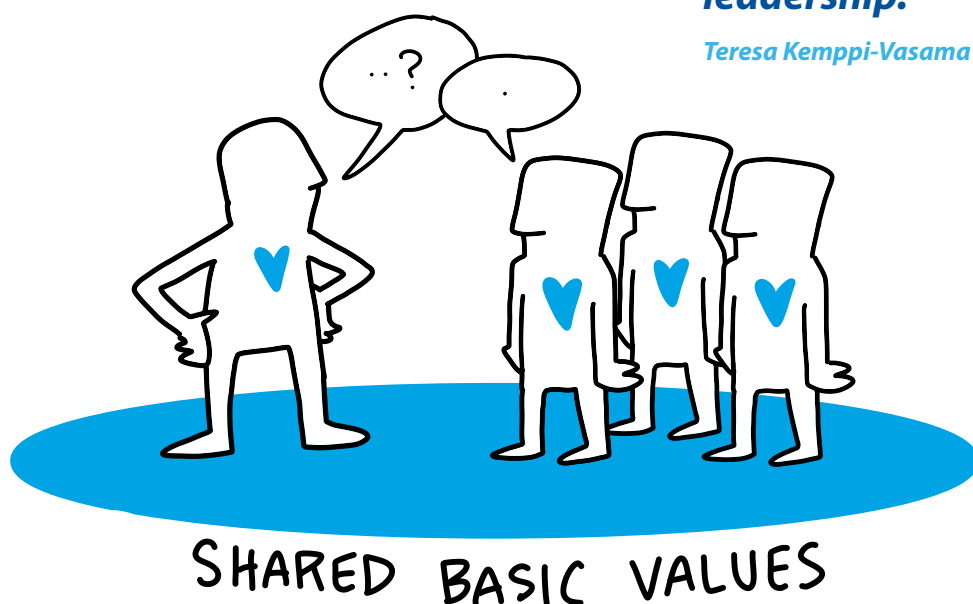
*Ilmarinen Mutual Pension Insurance Company*

***"It depends on the company's situation and the person you are leading, that is what makes it (Finnish leadership) difficult to define."***

*Johanna Ikkäheimo Lappset Group Oy*

***"Finnish people are known for keeping their word if they promise something. Just shake hands on it and it gets done. And that is also visible in our leadership."***

*Teresa Kemppi-Vasama Kemppi Oy*





***"It is true that Finnish leadership is a little bit like this sort of "boy scout type of leadership". That means that we do what we promise and we do it with a good attitude."***

***Tuomas Syrjänen*** *Futurice Oy*

## 2. The second paradox:

# The good and bad sides of focusing on issues

Many of the experts highlighted professional skills as the biggest strength of Finnish leadership. We have no tradition of leadership by profession. A large share of management continue to "rise" to their positions from among the employees. Finnish leaders know how to interpret numbers and rely on processes. This has enabled good ability to make profits. At best, a Finnish organisation is like an efficient machine led as regularly as clockwork towards the desired objective.

However, this is also not a black-and-white issue. Instead of people, leaders are focused on numbers, which results in communicating through numbers, not words. Less emphasis is put on inspiring staff and leading an experience of meaningfulness. The focus on numbers and processes also manifests in organisations as a lack of a culture of experimentation and excessive attachment to processes, "a love of processes". Too much emphasis is put on refining the existing operations, also in situations where it would be advisable to boldly seek and explore new opportunities. Therefore, Finnish leadership involves both efficient and solution-oriented delivery of results as well as attachment to old, previously learned models which bury humaneness under numbers and figures.

***"Finnish leadership is more concerned with leading issues than people. More focus is put on processes than encouragement and inspiration."***

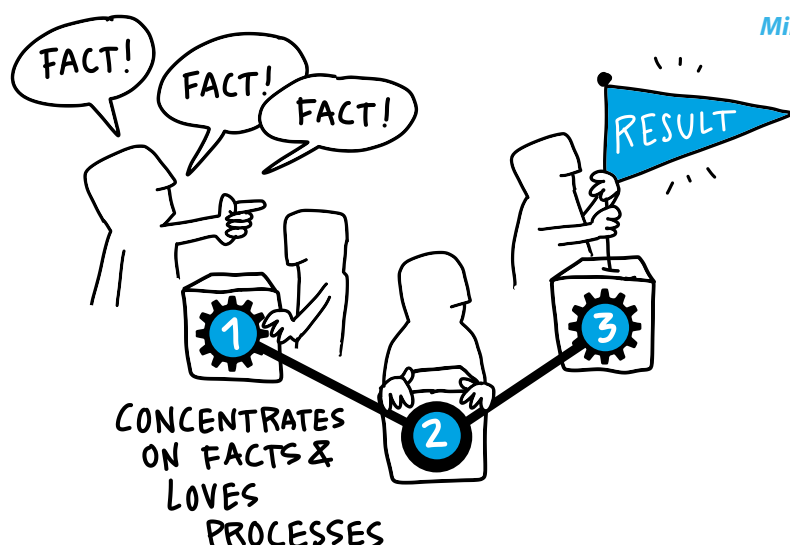
*Päivi Rahkonen* Municipality of Hollola

***"Finnish leadership is gradually becoming less authoritarian. This has been a slow change and a lot remains to be done."***

*Peppi Kaira* SOL Oy

***"Finnish leadership has developed to become much more human-oriented (...), with a focus on the individual and with improved communication. We have moved away from leading based on status."***

*Mirva Antila* IBM Finland Oy





***"Finnish leadership is based on reports and monitoring. Instead of being interested in what to do in the next month or two, the focus is on the previous month's figures."***

***Kimmo Kedonpää*** *Pipelife Finland Oy*



### 3. The third paradox:

## The ground to earth nature of Finnish leadership

**Finnish leadership** is straightforward, clear and honest. Finnish leaders are easily approachable. The power distance between employees and leadership is small in Finland, which enables a far less hierarchical discussion culture compared to Central European countries. Finnish managers are not overly self-important or make a big deal out of their role. In practice, this is apparent in activities such as managers eating in the same cafeteria or even at the same table as their employees.

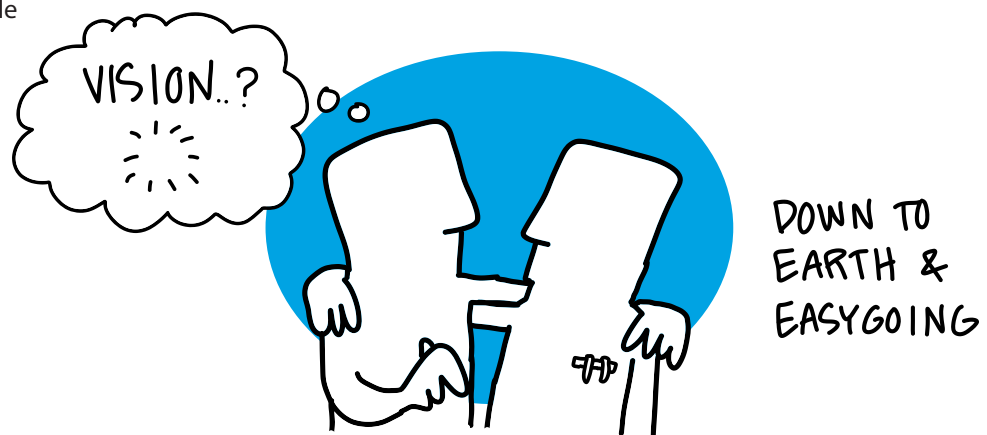
**In Finland, there** is a relatively good atmosphere of trust between employees and management. A system of elected officials has sustained the inclusion of an employee representative in decision-making, and many leaders are constantly in contact with a wide group of personnel. Our history of collaboration is still alive at many workplaces.

**The downside of** being down to earth is a highlighted sense of humility and modesty. Having the reputation of being full of oneself continues to be one of the worst social stigmas attributed to a person in Finland. In leadership, such an attitude may lead to an overly low level of ambition. If companies are worried about biting off more than they can chew and fearful of ending up becoming a laughing stock, it will be difficult for them to expand their operations abroad and speak highly of their products and ability to deliver as well as build their dreams to such their full extent.

**Indeed, it appears** that while the down to earth nature of Finnish leadership fosters mutual trust and cooperation built upon this, it simultaneously produces challenges to developing activities and may not be best to promote boldness and setting tough goals.

***"I feel that strengths typical for Finnish leadership include straightforwardness, uncomplicatedness, benevolence, lack of hierarchy, equality, result orientation, having no political agenda, openness for new ideas and approaches, appropriateness, lack of self-importance, leading by experience, leading the troops openly, and trust."***

**Tommi Uitto** Nokia Oyj







***"Finnish organisations are known for their low hierarchy and a certain kind of an attitude, not making a huge deal out of things and somewhat ignoring hierarchies. We just get things done."***

***Teresa Kemppi-Vasama*** Kemppi Oy



A summary of the paradoxes:

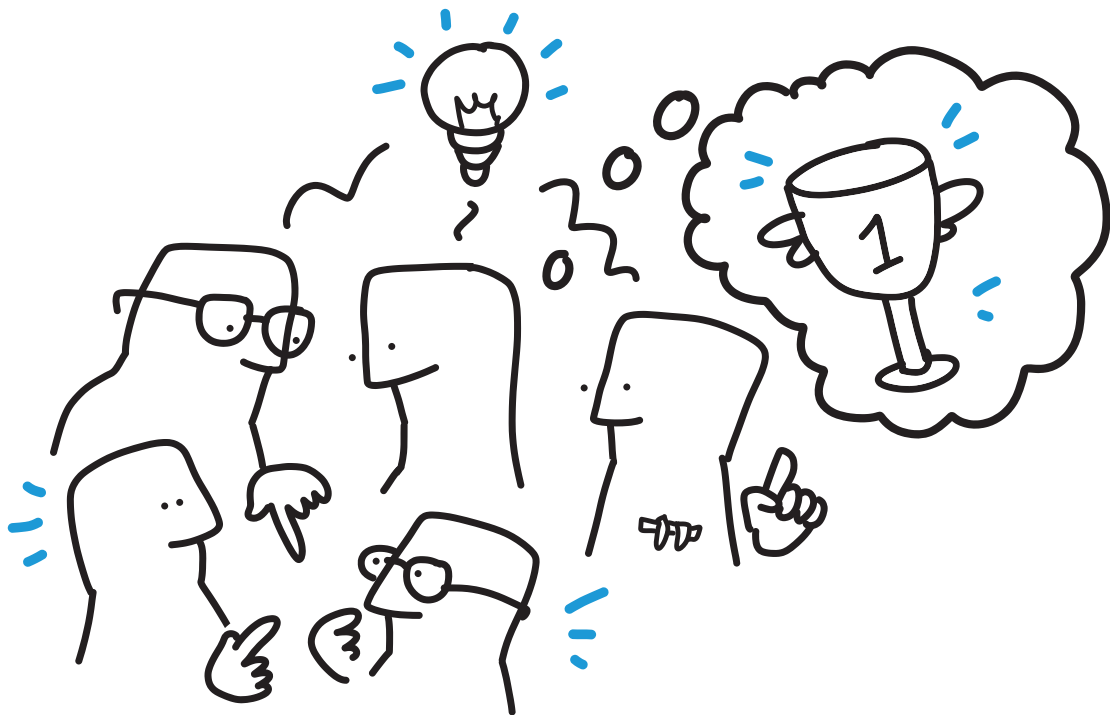
## An engineer-like approach in both good and bad

We can, in a slightly tongue in cheek manner, say that the Finnish leadership style is crystallised as a kind of an engineer-like approach. Professional skills are good and processes are running smoothly. Finnish leaders are neither self-important nor snobbish. They say they will get things done and will do as they say. Finnish leaders focus on issues and do not deem it necessary to emphasise hierarchies or put themselves on a pedestal. Finnish leaders trust their subordinates and give them room to get their work done.

**Power distances** are low and leaders easily approachable. Finnish leaders are also capable of making decisions. Instead of getting caught in discussions and the multitude of alternatives, they know how to draw the strands together and decide how to proceed. This characteristic was considered to separate the Finnish leader from the stereotypical

Swedish leader, for instance, for whom discursive decision making is more common. Nonetheless, there is also a downside to the “engineer-like approach”. It sets the focus on systems and processes instead of people; indeed, the relatively poor ability to inspire people and lead through a sense of meaningfulness was considered a weakness of Finnish leaders. The abilities for immersing oneself in activities and showing vulnerability, both of which are currently much-called-for qualities, are not among the key characteristics of the archetypal engineer.

**Reliance on processes** may also hinder renewal. Stepping outside processes may feel unpleasant, which makes abandoning old practices go more slowly. The lack of a culture of discussion reduces the possibility of including diverse views as part of the creation of new things.



**Finnish leaders lack** the courage to immerse themselves in an extensive and profound dialogue that penetrates the entire organisation. A shared, strong value basis is an important tool for Finnish leaders. To exaggerate somewhat, we can note that it is easy to avoid excessive discussions and only focus on the implementation when (one may assume that) everyone sees things the same way. Of course, this is a significant strength when it occurs. Cooperation between persons who share their values and ways of thinking always goes easily and smoothly. Finnish leaders know they can trust the word of another Finn and know which threat to pull to be effective. Finnish leaders know how to lead others in the way they would personally like to be led.

**However, the strong** and cohesive value basis is also a weakness. Differences and conflicts are what feed creativity and accelerate innovation. Finland also needs

experts from other parts of the world. Finnish leaders still have a lot to learn about managing people from different cultures.

**Finnish leaders must** also understand that even the native population in Finland is an increasingly heterogeneous group of people as diversity is both recognised and drawn attention to in increasing amounts.

**In the present** work for defining the concept, Finnish leaders have been considered to resort to overly modest way of thinking. While it is naturally a good thing to be true to one's word and deliver more rather than less than what is expected, we may ask whether this modesty puts the Finnish leader at a disadvantage in the global scale? Or, even worse, does this modesty set limitations to the personal thinking of Finnish leaders and the opportunities for their company's success?

## Strengths

- low hierarchy
- trust
- expertise
- solution orientation
- a good shared value basis

## Weaknesses

- low level of ambition
- lack of dialogue
- poor leadership of people
- a love of processes

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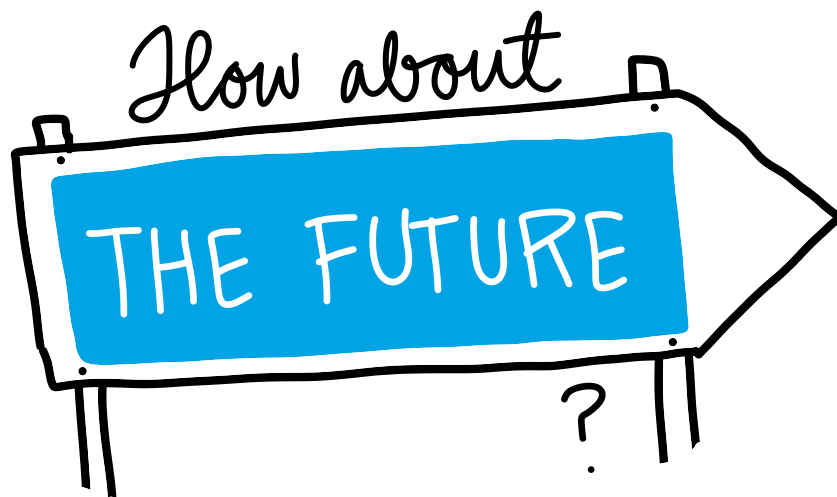
## Could we overcome these paradoxes?

**Is Finnish leadership** doomed to an eternal dilemma where the price of every advantage is a challenge in some other area or will it be possible to find solutions that undo the worst difficulties related to conflicts? The future direction of Finnish leadership should tackle the worst weaknesses and turn strengths into competitive advantages. What would this future of leadership look like?

2.

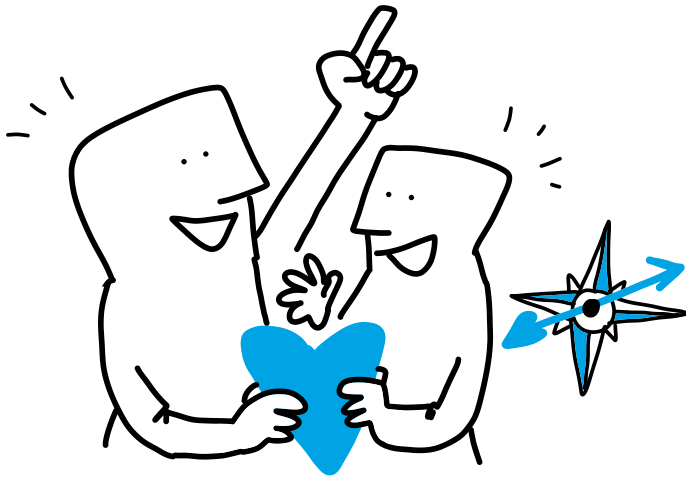
***To which direction  
should Finnish leadership  
be developed?***





For many parts, the participants at the interviews and workshop agreed on the direction of future development. A few clear themes on which the development should be focused emerged in the discussions. The development targets of Finnish leadership were sought from the current weaknesses which emerged in the previous section as well as comparisons to the challenges at the global level. The development needs of Finnish leadership were summarised in four theses.

# FINNISH+ Leadership



BEING PROUD OF THE  
SHARED BASIC VALUES

## Let's be proud of our shared, good value basis

In an international and multicultural world, we continue to have a permission to feel proud of our shared values which manifest as cultural strengths both at the national level as well as in work organisations. It could be worth naming these values, to speak openly about them and to declare that we act according to them. They should be made use of when telling the Finnish narrative. Good values can be a part of the cultural narrative also when they are supported by our neighbouring country. The question of whether these values apply exclusively to Finland is irrelevant from this point of view.

## Let's make low power distances, trust, frankness and uncomplicatedness our competitive advantage

An increasing share of the added value produced by people is founded on encounters between people and thinking together. Such work is led in a different way than predictable processes more typical to the industrial age. Experts lead their own and shared work in increasing amounts. A culture of leadership that facilitates autonomous work, a fruitful culture of discussion and an experience that every employee is valued and trusted is already a competitive advantage in the world. Finnish leadership contains inherent features that support this kind of leadership and organisational culture. These should be further developed and utilised in the competition for the best experts.

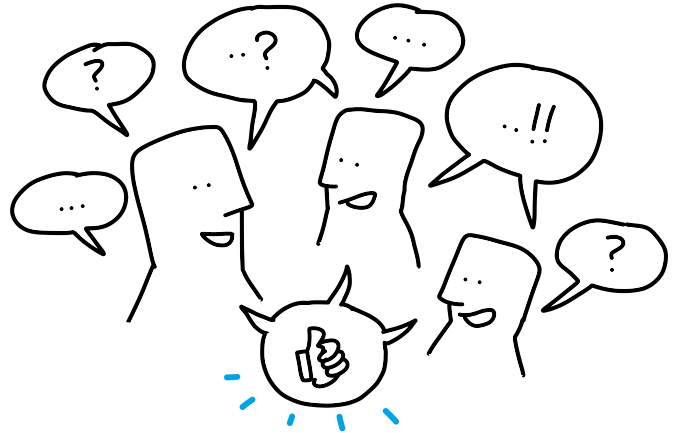


GAINING  
A COMPETITIVE  
ADVANTAGE BECAUSE  
OF LOW HIERARCHY

## A better culture of discussion should be learned and incorporated into the engineer-like ability for making decisions

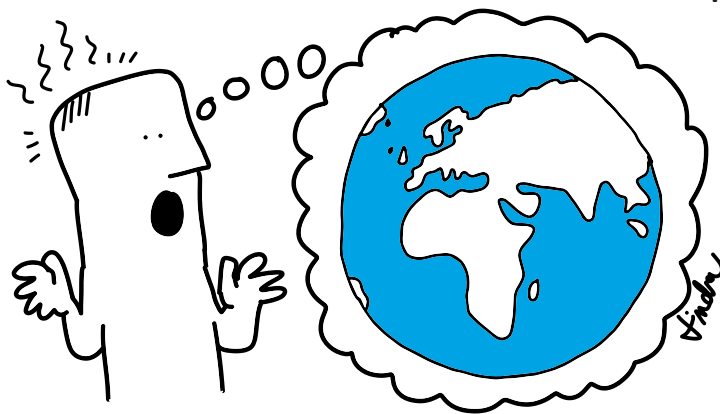
Speaking, interacting and being present are the most important tools of leadership. Today, people have an increasing craving for narratives, a sense of meaningfulness, being heard and a strong experience of involvement. A more psychological leadership approach and encountering each employee as an individual allows us to better utilise the competence in the organisation as well as to inspire people. At the same time, we also learn to manage different kinds of people, which develops Finnish leadership to a good direction from the perspective of multiculturalism.

This involves a transition from a mechanistic concept of the organisation towards an approach where the organisation is perceived as a living organism. Everyone participates in generating ideas and developing issues, and competence is spread as structures allow more leeway to employees. The ability to encourage the engagement of people is turned into a work of art: this involves learning to combine collaboration and dialogue that encompasses the entire organisation with working together with others efficiently and an ability to make decisions.



LEARNING A BETTER DISCUSSION  
CULTURE & COMBINING IT INTO  
DECISION MAKING.

## Let's think more boldly and broadly



THINKING BIGGER  
AND BOLDER!

We should bravely utilise the competence in our society. We have an excellent foundation for utilising the opportunities brought by digitalisation and new technology. We are more lacking in courage than ability. Understanding the bigger picture involves comprehension of the change brought by globalisation and a better utilisation of the opportunities it has opened up. Internationalisation is not an alternative – it is a vital condition. It is not worth being stuck alone, jealously hanging onto your own kind. Together, we are stronger and more interesting. This demands courage to be open to cooperation, also with so-called competitors.

With increased uncertainty, the significance of experiments is emphasised. The key to future success is in collaborative activities and increasing a culture of experimentation. In addition to perseverance and resilience, the Finnish concept of 'sisu' could also include the courageousness to immerse oneself in new things. Leadership must be able to create trust in the future and set aims high. We should make it our goal that the Finnish working life will be the boldest in the world by 2025.

3.

***Finnish leadership  
in an international  
comparison***







## Nordic distinctiveness?

How unique are the characteristics of Finnish leadership?

In international comparisons on values, social systems and working life models, Finland is typically bunched together with other Nordic countries. Compared to other countries, the Nordic countries appear rather distinct while being fairly similar with one another.

This observation also comes up in the international comparisons on leadership styles. The surveys have traditionally confirmed the notion of a distinct Nordic style of leadership. The characteristics most often attributed to the Nordic leadership style include low hierarchies, openness, a team-like approach, equality, a drive for consensus, and functionality. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, the Scandinavian countries were still considered somewhat more full-blooded examples of this kind of leadership compared to Finland. In particular, the studies perceived Finnish leadership style as more hierarchical than the other Nordic nations.

## Sweden as an advocate for the Nordic leadership style

**The understanding** of the distinctiveness and superiority of the Nordic leadership style has at times been practically fed from within the Nordic countries. The Swedes have been most active in this, often referring to the “Swedish leadership style” instead of a Nordic one. As the biggest Nordic country and a former great power, Sweden has had an economic and political interest in profiling itself and acting as an advocate for the Nordic values around the world. The Swedes have also firmly believed that the Swedish leadership style has historically been a source of an important competitive advantage for the country and its companies.

**Over the years**, Sweden can be presumed to have been the most important country, along with the US, that Finland has looked up to for new lessons in leadership.

**As the culturally-bound** leadership style has been considered a significant source of a competitive advantage in Sweden – unlike in Finland, for instance – there has also been a lot of discussion in Sweden on the sustainability of this advantage in the increasingly international economy. In the 2000s, this discussion has produced numerous analyses of the Swedish leadership style, its strengths and its weaknesses, to which the above observations of the Finnish leadership can also be compared.

## Finland vs. Sweden

**At the general** level and based on a quick overview, the strengths of the Finnish and Swedish leadership styles appear to be largely similar. However, the emphases of the styles differ in the ways that the various strengths are constructed.

**In Finland**, low hierarchies are based on the fact that there is a desire to construct organisations that act like clockwork according to the agreed processes. Once the processes have been described and determined, everyone should know how to act. There is no need for an army of supervisors to breathe down people’s neck as those in charge of different tasks know what they must do and have the required skills. Finland has relatively more lean organisations compared to many other countries, including Sweden.

**In Sweden**, low hierarchies are not as strongly based on an engineer-like way of thinking. Indeed, it is important to note that although Sweden has traditionally had strong competence in engineering, there is hardly any mention of an engineer-like approach in any descriptions concerning the features that characterise the Swedish leadership style. In Sweden, low hierarchies and advanced autonomy of employees are more likely to be based on a deep-rooted idea of social equality and democracy. This understanding also cuts through the approaches used by a working organisation.

**All Nordic countries** are societies where trust is a top priority. In Finland, so-called micro-level trust between individuals is particularly strong based on international comparisons. As a rule, Finns trust other Finns. Finnish leadership also makes use of this cultural feature. Trust between a supervisor and a subordinate is built in a combined effect of a presumably shared value basis and carefully determined processes.

**More time** is spent on building trust in Sweden. Dialogue in the working community is a key tool for this. The Swedish leadership style does not involve making a presumption of a primarily shared value basis to the extent as the Finnish style does. Sweden’s culture is considerably less uniform compared to Finland. At best, dialogue produces a sense of shared community spirit at the workplace, a concept known in Swedish as *medarbetarskap*. It is difficult to translate this concept into English in a natural and unambiguous way.

**The increasingly international** and knowledge intensive economy sets challenges to leadership as presented above. Although distinct features originating from national cultures may continue to function as strengths in management, similar principles more or less apply to all organisations acting in the international market regardless of their country of origin. Finnish leadership could learn from its Swedish counterpart at least in the areas of dialogue, dealing with multiculturalism and thinking big. Based on previous studies, at least one of the clear challenges of Swedish leadership is related to an ability to act quickly and flexibly in the way that has been considered one of the strengths of the Finnish leadership style above.

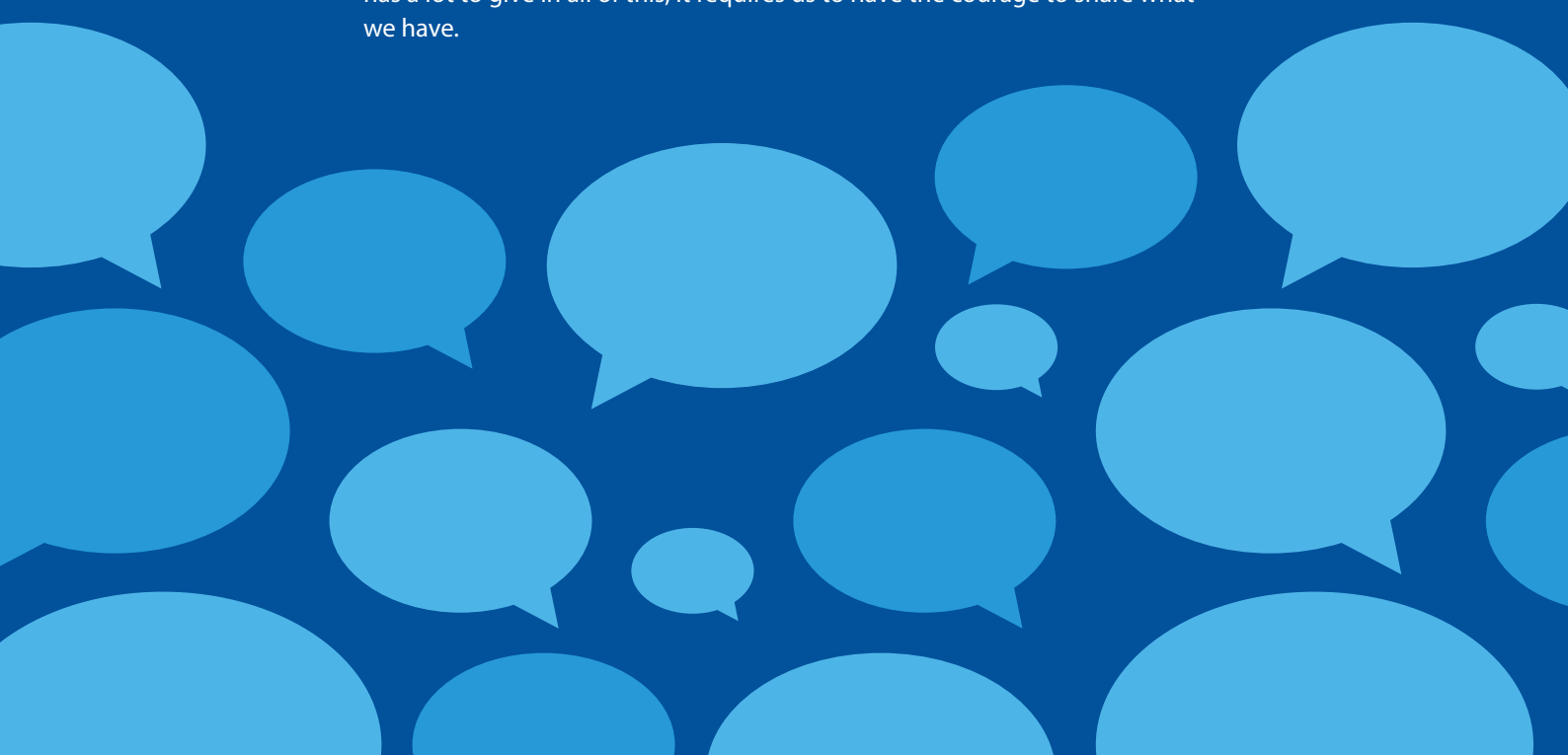


## *Epilogue by the authors*

**This has been** an interesting topic to explore. The massive scale of the assignment caused a lot of scepticism towards our task. Is it even possible to define what Finnish leadership and management is in just a few months? Perhaps we have also lost touch with the tradition of storytelling, which eats away at our courage to eliminate some elements and emphasise others. Perhaps the engineer-like approach is also apparent here: in order to define the concept, we feel obliged to include every possible fact and find ourselves unable to make statements without solid grounds. However, this would result in a poor narrative.

**In any case**, our scepticism was constantly accompanied by immense enthusiasm. A large group of people wished to share their time and participate in this historical effort. The work for defining the concept also attracted a lot of interest on social media and there has been a constant flow of inquiries on the progress of the work. It might be that narratives are still considered attractive. It is also possible that there is currently a demand for such a national narrative. Finland's centenary has granted the "right" for us to consider national issues in a multicultural and international world. Working life is also undergoing a major transformation and we are in dire need of different tools in order to cope with it. Self-understanding provides tools for development and appealing narratives can be used as marketing material when we aim to attract experts from around the world to Finland.

**Finland needs leadership** more than it has in a long time. At the same time, the structural change inspired by technological development requires bold decisions that support renewal as well as responsibility for taking care of everyone. In addition, climate change mitigation will also require firm decisions and genuine responsibility-taking in the long term. While Finland has a lot to give in all of this, it requires us to have the courage to share what we have.



# Appendix 1. Data collection

## Interviews of leaders

In January 2018, representatives of Filosofian Akatemia Oy interviewed 13 Finnish leaders from different industries in order to determine what Finnish leadership means – now and in the future. The interviews were conducted by telephone or e-mail.

The interviewees:

Teresa Kemppi-Vasama, Kemppi Oy

Timo Ritakallio, OP Group

Matti Alahuhta, DevCo Partners Oy

Tapio Luoma, Archbishop of Turku and Finland, Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland

Kimmo Kedonpää, Pipelife Finland Oy

Tommi Uitto, Nokia Finland

Päivi Rahkonen, Municipality of Hollola

Johanna Ikäheimo, Lappset Group

Tuomas Syrjänen, Futurice Oy

Satu Huber, Elo Mutual Pension Insurance Company

Peppi Kaira, SOL Laundry Services and SOLEMO group

Mirva Antila, IBM Finland

Risto Murto, Varma Mutual Pension Insurance Company

## Owner perspective

In addition to the leader and industry, leadership is affected by the interests of owners. In order to ensure that we obtained a versatile perspective, two experts have also been interviewed on ownership relations in companies for this report.

Owner perspectives were provided by:

Timo Leino, Nordhaven Corporate Finance

Pia Santavirta, Finnish Venture Capital Association

## Workshop on 5 February 2018

In addition to the interviews, the Working Life 2020 project organised a workshop for defining Finnish leadership together with Filosofian Akatemia Oy. Around 50 Finnish leaders, experts and researchers participated in the workshop. The data collected in the interviews was used as the basis for the workshop activities.

Those who registered for and participated in the workshop:

Aino Määttä, VTJ, Sinituote Oy

Anne Kovalainen, Professor, University of Turku

Annika Blomberg, Postdoctoral researcher, Turku School of Economics

Anu Sajavaara, Head of Industrial Relations, Service Sector Employers PALTA

Ari Rämö, Managing Director, Sick Oy

Asko Myllymäki, COO, Lehto-Group Oyj

Elise Ramstad, Senior Adviser, Business Finland

Hannele Seeck, Professor, University of Turku

Hanno Airas, CEO, Novosan Oy

Hannu Stålhammar, Senior Specialist, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

Harry Salonaho, PhD (Econ.), Pinus Consult Oy

Heidi Hiltunen, Senior Specialist, Working Life 2020

Janne Tienari, Professor, Hanken

Jari Hakanen, Research Professor, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

Jarmo Lönnfors, Managing Director, HR4 Group Oy  
Jesse Peurala, CEO, Fraktio Oy  
Jokke Eljala, Research Manager, The Association for Finnish Work  
Joonas Kiminki, CEO, Wunder  
Kenneth Söderholm, Senior Consultant, Corporate Spirit Oy  
Kirsimarja Blomqvist, Professor, Lappeenranta University of Technology  
Klaus Kuhanen, CEO, JCDecaux Finland Oy  
Krista Pahkin, Director, SMEs and growth, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health  
Kristiina Ketomäki, Managing Director, Plastep Oy  
Leenamajja Ojala, PhD (Tech.), Pro Competence Oy  
Margita Klemetti, Project Manager, Working Life 2020  
Marika Tammeaid, Leading Specialist, Sitra  
Marita Paajaste, HR Director, Barona Group Oy  
Marita Salo, Director, HENRY ry  
Mauno Tirkkonen, Partner, Pertec Consulting Oy  
Mika Gylén, HR Director, Keva  
Nuppu Rouhiainen, Programme Manager, Business Finland  
Ossi Aura, PhD, Ossi Aura Consulting Oy  
Panu Luukka, Corporate Culture Designer, Leidenschaft Oy  
Riikka Jakovuori, Executive Business Consultant, Gofore Oy  
Riina Nousiainen, Specialist, STTK  
Riitta Hyppänen, Business Coach, CM & HR Consulting Oy  
Risto Havunen, Entrepreneur, Hippocampus Networks  
Sanna Varpukari, Managing Director, Sovelto Oy  
Satu Kalliokulju, Head of Consumer Excellence, Fiskars Oyj  
Satu Wrede, Chair of the Board, Metro-Auto Group Oy  
Staffan Kurtén, Chair of the Board, HRM Partners Oy  
Susanna Blomqvist, Owner-Entrepreneur, Saintex Oy  
Terhikki Rimmanen, CEO, Humap Consultation Oy  
Terttu Pakarinen, Development Manager, KT Local Government Employers  
Tuomo Alasoini, Leading Expert, Business Finland

Those participating in the implementation of the workshop at Filosofian Akatemia were:

Frank Martela, Iida Mäkikallio, Karoliina Jarenko, Maija Tiitinen, Miia Järvilehto, Nick Ahleskog, Peter Kenttä, Reima Launonen, Sami Paju, Tapani Riekkö, Tiina Setälä, Tuukka Kostamo and Tytti Kokko.

### **Interviews and compiling the report**

The working group for the project was formed by Reima Launonen, Nick Ahleskog and Karoliina Jarenko of Filosofian Akatemia. The third section was written by Tuomo Alasoini, a leading expert at Business Finland.

### **The process for defining the concept was steered by the Finnish leadership style working group**

Margita Klemetti, Project Manager, Working Life 2020  
Karoliina Jarenko, CEO, Filosofian Akatemia  
Tuomo Alasoini, Leading Expert, Business Finland  
Krista Pahkin, Director, SMEs and growth, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health  
Jokke Eljala, Research Manager, The Association for Finnish Work  
Heidi Hiltunen, Senior Specialist, Working Life 2020

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